Literary Cabinet.

Si non tantus fructus perciperetur ex his studiis, quantum percipi constat, sed ex his delectatio sola peteretur; tamen hæc animi remissio judicanda esset libero homine dignissima.

CICERO.

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The Essayist.

No. XIV.

"Fronti nulla fides."—Juv.

THIS is one, among many of those sentimental observations on the human character, with which the works of Juvenal abound.—The Roman satirist, whose acquaintance with mankind, as an advocate, probably opened to him new views of human nature, has given us the result of his experience in the words of my motto. But shall we make no exception to the rule, which the poet inculcates? Shall we never believe that the pale cheek and the weeping eye are the attendants of misfortune? Shall we reject the moving prayer and the uplifted hand of the mendicant, whose tattered garments seem a reproach to his fellow creatures? This was not what the moralist intended. He meant to guard us against those pernicious characters, whom we must meet with in life. He knew how liable man is to be deceived by appearances. And who would not believe that the day, which was ushered in, with all the glories and beauties of morning, would be fair? Sensible of this propensity, which marks man in his earliest years; for even the infant smiles or weeps, as those around him rejoice or mourn, he wished to lead us to reflect on the danger and impropriety of yielding to it implicitly. His object was especially to induce us hereby to watch the conduct of all whom we had the least reason to suspect, as designing to injure us. Whilst he respected the ardor of youth, and would even encourage the fervor of their attachments where all was safe, he would call up to view the consequences of being deceived. He would paint the feelings of anger, of shame, of remorse, which would agitate the bosom. He would set before us the treachery of Callippus, the ingratitude of Sextus Tarquin, and the perfidy of Perpenna.—He would bid us remember that these also were friends, that these also had given the warm embrace, and shed the tears of affection; and if we then affirmed that he colored too highly, he might answer us, tho severely, yet justly, in the words of the poet, "'Tis nature, pictur'd too severely true." Even then we might be tempted to revolt from his decision, and to pronounce those whom he would lead us to suspect, free from the smallest imputation of deceit. Unhappily we are always willing to acknowledge the

truth of the general rule, but invariably maintain that our own case is an exception. Thousands had tried in vain the magic castle of Atlantes, yet each succeeding Knight thought he was proof against the Enchanter's power.—Sometimes there will be an exception, but the unfrequency of its occurrence should lead us to be the more suspicious.

While however we consider the poet as holding up to view this moral lesson, and thus preparing us to guard against the dangerous consequences of trusting too implicitly to others, we should not forget to make one important application of his words. Hitherto we have contemplated others only, but the satirist undoubtedly meant that we should make ourselves the objects of examination also. On many men, who are even but little versed in the affairs of the world, it is unnecessary to inculcate this maxim. With regard to others, they have heard, and perhaps known too much, of the mask of hypocrisy, and of crocodile tears, to believe that sincerity always attends a serious countenance, or that the eye which glistens with pleasure, is the symbol of happiness. But, while he knows the world, he is unacquainted with himself; while he laughs at appearances in others, and compares them as Anacharsis did laws, to spider's webs, "formed to catch the weak, but unable to detain the strong," he not improbably relies on them more than the very man whom he ridicules. To-day he shall laugh at his neighbor for believing that a long face and a serious look will gain him esteem, and to-morrow, should he be in company with a set, whose principal merit lies in the gravity of their deportment, and the banishing from their faces of whatever resembles a smile, he would assume the same air, and torture his visage, more than Marsyas his body when in the hands of Apollo. Another makes sport of his friend, for what he denominates unmanly politeness, and yet, to save appearances, as the world call it, would imitate him to the life.

Whilst we endeavor, with the utmost difficulty, to become acquainted with human nature, as unveiled to us in the characters of others, we forget that we shall learn more with regard to it from ourselves, than from all the rest of mankind. We would wish to be convinced of the folly of relying on appearances, by attending to others. We pity their misfortunes, we rejoice at their prosperity and smile at their pleasant adventures, which spring from this cause, and yet overlook the many instances which we ourselves afford. We cease to remember how often this has been the foundation upon which we have rested our hopes. Cato was not the first who expected to impress his enemies with awe, by the firmness of his step and the fierceness of his looks, nor was Cleopatra the last who confided in her beauty to save her from the impending vengeance of an Antony.

It seems to be the nature of man to moralize on others and to satirize them, but never to make the application to himself. The hypocrite will join in a hearty laugh against another of the same character, and the debauchee will rail at his brother rake. This trait is particularly displayed in the application which I have made of the words of Juvenal. Would

we learn from thence to measure appearances in ourselves, no less than in others, I imagine there would be less reason for accusing mankind of relying too much on them inothers. If each would look into himself and know the true motives by which he is regulated, he would find that where he had smiled at another he could with more propriety have laughed at himself. That when he has been displeased with himself for having been imposed upon by the exterior of another, he was perhaps resting the success of some measure or some scheme upon the same basis.

The physical philosopher may trust to appearances, but not he whose field of action is the world. The former may confide in what he sees; for it is God who rules the year. It is he who adorns the morning with smiles and draws the variegated curtain of light over the western sky. Still however, though it is God who presides, he does not look for stoic-like uniformity. Though the full moon, rising serene, promise a fair night, and the rich profusion of spring bids him extend his view to an abundant autumn, he still knows that he may be disappointed. But, while he feels and acknowledges with the poet, that "whatever is, is right," the same consolation is not left for him who mingles with the world. Here he cannot rely on any appearances, or at least, but seldom. On the true christian only can he safely depend—and how shall he discover him. Nor has he the consolation of the philosopher, for he cannot be brought to think that moral evil is productive of good. The perfidy of a friend, the ingratitude of a child, the treachery of an adherent, must still be looked upon with horror. This is the picture which is occasioned by trusting to appearances; and half the miseries of man may be traced to the same source.—Whether therefore we regard others, or bring home the moral to our own hearts, we still agree with my author, "fronti nulla fides."

ALCIMUS.

On Wit.

AMONG the personal qualities which attract admiration, there is no one perhaps for which a part of mankind feel more ambitious of being distinguished, than for a talent at wit. By wit, in the modern acceptation of the word, is meant the tracing out concealed resemblances in things apparently dissimilar. The talent for wit is often found in conjunction with a sound judgment and vigorous intellect, yet there is no necessary connection between them; but they frequently exist apart. Wit is rather an effort of imagination than of intellect; as it consists more in comparison and combination than in abstraction. The man of close reasoning, in pursuing his train of thinking, among the crowd of ideas presented to his mind, fixes upon those immediately connected with the main subject; while the man of wit, by giving scope to imagination, seizes upon those that are foreign and have but a distant connection with the principal ideas.

In this manner, by an eccentric and wild association, he groups together an assemblage of seemingly incoherent ideas, and forms a picture, which comet-like, surprises us by its sudden and unexpected appearance.

The sources of wit are suscep-

tible of no limitation, since between all the objects in nature comparisons may be run, and resemblances may be traced. But different persons, in selecting their objects, will be governed according to the delicacy of their taste, the accuracy of their observation of men and things, or the relish of the persons whom they are aiming to please.

The learned and refined choose to display their wit in classical allusions, rhetorical tropes, or sallies of logic and sophisms; except on particular occasions, when the fastidiousness of learning gives place to unrestrained jocularity; then they descend to the common walks of life, and borrow their images from less dignified objects.

Different kinds of wit relishes to different persons; but in general, as wit must be sudden in order to make it hit, that which is labored and far fetched, is apt to evaporate on the passage. Learned wit is commonly too obscure or formal to suit the generality of palates, and a witticism which at a learned board would be clapped all around, would have but little effect, if broached in a mackarel boat.

In extemporaneous effusions, when his object is applause, the *wit* generally accommodates himself to the taste and capacity of his auditors; for otherwise, however keen or brilliant he may be, he fails of his end unless the flash is instantaneous to the whole company. It not unfrequently happens, however, that some of the party, unfortunately of mind opaque or ears obtuse, don't begin to feel the shock, till both the flash and the clap have subsided among the rest. But what is still more unhappy, is for some individual to ask a repetition of it, for few witticisms will bear a a second edition.

It often adds much to the force and beauty of extemporaneous wit, to have it couched in innendoes, to be hinted in few words dogmatically, and left to the sagacity of the hearers to catch the allusion: but to those who are dull of apprehension, the force of it in such cases is chiefly lost.

There is a perpetual tendency in persons who deal in witticisms, to recede from dignity and delicacy of expression, and to strike upon low objects and vulgar incidents. Indeed the propensity is so strange, and the inducements so many, that persons of *refinement* will hardly be restrained from this indulgence.

The truth is, the region of wit lies chiefly in low ground: hence those who deal largely in it, find their interest in descending near the fountain head. From familiar objects and the pursuits of common life, are the chief of the allusions borrowed; and these sources so prolific, are never exhausted. Besides, wit is a social thing, and never flourishes in solitude. Men never shut themselves up in their closets to fabricate smart sayings and ludicrous images; but these are drawn forth spontaneously in social amusement, and in active exertions. It requires an elevation of spirits, and a vivacity of imagination which are rarely experienced by bookish and sendentary men. And it is the desire of pleasing that gives a stimulus for the cultivation of this talent. We see this peculiarly exemplified, in men pursuing common business in company, where the mind indulges a free relaxation. They then put themselves upon

a competition, and make it the principal diversion of the day to deal in smart rubs, repartees and shrewd comparisons. They are daily trained to it, and as a happy expedient for beguiling the labors of the day, they are continually whetting their talents for facetiousness and invective. The greater part of circulating witticisms which have gained permanency among us, are of their coinage. Witticisms are not the offspring of study or premeditation, but they burst forth on the spur of the occasion, when by a sudden impulse the imagination is fired, and seizes strongly upon its objects, and a few arch rustics would forge more in half an hour than would be formed in an age in the laboratory of a cloister. How often have we seen companies of turnpikers, artisans or tin-pedlars, whom a meal of fried razors with vinegar sauce, could not have given greater keenness. Yes. in these persons, and on such occasions many ebullitions of wit, smartstrokes and original expressions, escape, that would do honor to the page of a Shakespeare, but are all lost for want of an amanuensis. Oftentimes a rencounter takes place between a couple well disciplined to the art, like the famous pair that Horace fell in with on his journey to Brundusium, and with wonderful dexterity they parry and thrust. But such wit is oftentimes gross and profane, and needs refinement before it can delight a polished ear.

The free indulgence of wit is nevertheless attended with mischievous consequences. As the habitual devotee is lying at catch for every opportunity to gratify his ruling passion, he almost of course cultivates a spirit of levity, which is apt to banish from the mind all serious thought.—His main object being to catch applause by exciting a laugh, the temptation becomes almost irresistible to depart from decorum, and as wit is much of it conversant with low objects, he is apt to contract an impure imagination, than which nothing is more easily acquired, or with more difficulty eradicated. In such persons likewise there is a strong propensity to trifle and sport with serious things, since to the thoughtless and profane they will never fail to recommend themselves, and many an expression which has not the least appearance of wit, is relished merely on account of its profaneness. It need not be told, how dangerous is such a practice, and how destructive of the moral principle.

So strong is the inducement to men of wit to indulge in this practice, that many who were in other respects eminent and respectable, have in this manner lessened their dignity and done dishonor to their profession. The examples of Swift and Sterne are sufficient to caution the literary world against the indulgence of this practice. If it is hardly possible for those whose ruling passions lead this way, to possess that self command which so becomes wisdom and dignity.—Where is the man who endeavors to be witty on all occasions, that can restrain himself within the limits of delicacy and decorum? And surely applause so transient and capricious, is dearly bought, if purchased at the expence of virtue.

FOR THE CABINET.

MESSRS. EDITORS,

THE admission of moral evil into the world, has often been a subject inexplicable to many persons of seriousness snd reflection. Since the moral world, they say, is under the superintendance of an omniscient, just, and benevolent Being, who also is the creator of all things, why were not mankind preserved free from temptation and the possibility of a fall; and thus the misery, which was the inevitable consequence of transgression, prevented? It must indeed be confessed, that many of the ways of God are to us mysterious; and though the divine conduct, in this particular instance, seems, at the first view, to be obscured by clouds and darkness, yet upon a more thorough examination of the subject, we may obtain so much light as to be convinced, that justice and judgment are the habitation of his throne.

Between the natural and moral worlds there is a very manifest resemblance. That same Being, who governs and disposes of the one, is also the sovereign arbiter of the other. And the existence of natural evil is, in many respects, as unaccountable as that of moral evil; and if it involved our eternal happiness in the same degree, it would also excite our enquiry as much concerning the necessity of its existence. It might, with as much propriety, be asked, why pain, sickness, distress, and bodily infirmities were suffered to disturb the repose of mankind; or why storms and tempests, earthquakes and fire, were permitted to spread desolating calamities through the earth, as it might be; why sin was suffered to exist. And indeed with much more propriety, since the latter is dependent on the volitions of moral agents; but the former are to us inevitable. But though many events take place in the natural world, the reason of which is unknown to us, yet there are many of those seeming evils, which, upon a closer examination, appear to be productive of real good. And if this is true of those things, the necessity of whose existence we readily perceive, we have reason to conclude, that it is also true of those whose use we do not understand. The nature of things is such, that we are necessitated to labor for our daily sustenance. And we often complain that such is our situation, supposing it might have been otherwise. But will any one suppose that an indolent man is happier than he who labors? Though the body, in idleness, is at ease, the mind is always filled with languor and discontent.

There are also many other things which men are apt to call evils, but which prove, in the end, to be important benefits. It is a fact, that we know not how to appreciate any benefit, till we are deprived of its enjoyment. Nor can we judge of the blessing of health, till we suffer its loss by sickness. And when we are recovered from this, which we esteem as one of our greatest calamities, we feel a much greater degree of satisfaction in the enjoyment of health, than we did before. And all the trials and difficulties which we have to encounter, inspire us with patience and fortitude, and prepare us for noble enterprize.

We know not that we have confidence to face an enemy, till we are called to the field of action;

nor do we know what we can endure, till we have learned by experience.

If these things had never existed, but if instead of them, the earth had brought forth her fruit spontaneously, and mankind had lived at ease, and without labor, the mind would never have been enlightened by the cheering beams of science, but would have been doomed to remain in brutal stupidity. If a savage state is preferable to a civilized, or if ignorance is preferable to knowledge, then such a state would be superior to the present. But can there be happiness in a state of lethargy and inactivity? Such in fact, must have been our situation, if things had not been constituted as they are. The mind is formed for active employment, and unless it is thus employed, it cannot be happy.

If then, natural calamities are productive of real good, we may conclude, that moral evil is also. Besides, much of the natural evil which mankind suffer, is productive of moral good. When we see any of our fellow men destitute and distressed, it naturally excites in us emotions of pity and compassion, and we immediately exert ourselves to relieve them. And, by such frequent opportunities of doing good, the principles of benevolence and sympathy are strengthened. But would the state of man be preferable, if, being free from distress, he is also destitute of benevolence? In order that men should be prepared for the enjoyment of happiness in a future state, they must be virtuous; and their virtue must be tried and approved. Were a king to choose from all his soldiers, a number for the guard of his person, he would choose those whose courage had been brought to the test, and who were never known to forsake him in the hour of danger. But mankind cannot be placed in a state of probation, unless virtue and vice are both set before them. And vice cannot be set before them unless there are some of that character. It would seem that this is necessary in the nature of things, in order to constitute a moral agent; for we see it is not only the case with men, but also with angels. We should not do evil that good may come. But we may conclude that temptation is as necessary to try the strength of virtue, as the field of action to prove the courage of a soldier. And as often as men are tempted and come off victorious, so often virtuous habits are strengthened. An object can never appear in a more striking view, than when it is placed in contrast with one of a directly opposite character. And thus, if moral evil had never been admitted, mankind would never have known, in such an eminent degree, how lovely virtue is. Nor can we conceive how the character of Jehovah, in manifesting his love of virtue and benevolence, and his abhorrence of vice, could have shone forth with such distinguished lustre as it now does.

Those persons, without doubt, who regain the blissful abode of Paradise by perseverance in the exercise of virtue and self-denial, will experience more joy and delight in a future state of existence, than if man had never fallen. As those things which we call natural evils are necessary in our present state, to invigorate the faculties of the mind; so in the moral world, the existence of vice is doubtless a means of giving much greater exercise to vir-

tuous principles. And if this is in fact the case in this world, it is but reasonable to conclude, that it will be the case throughout endless duration. We may then, with propriety say, that God will finally cause the wickedness of man to redound to his own glory and the purposes of infinite wisdom.

But if some are not satisfied with these remarks, let them be told that it is not for vain man, whose foundation is in the dust, to pretend to comprehend infinitude, or to call in question the acts of the Almighty. His counsel will stand, and he will do all his pleasure, whether finite minds can comprehend it or not. Let them then cease to be inquisitive concerning things that are not revealed, and humbly adore their Creator, who is himself incomprehensible.

The Bower.

.....Sometimes
We bid bright Fiction to resemble Truth,
And sometimes speak what Truth herself approves. Hes. Theog.

SCIENCE.

SENT from above, on Egypt's plain,
Fair Science first began her reign,
In liberty and peace;
Thales, at length her charms espied,
Made her consent to be his bride,
And follow him to Greece.

Homer, inspir'd by her, arose,
Her worth and beauty to disclose,
And seiz'd the trump of fame;
Far through the earth the notes resound,
Wondering, the nations catch the sound,
And oft repeat her name.

He then proclaim'd what chiefs of yore
Led armies to the Trojan shore,
In glory's cause to engage;
What heroes press'd the bloody plain,
By Hector, or Achilles slain,
And who escap'd their rage.

In Greece, historians first began,
Rous'd by her voice, to heap on man
Blessings beyond compare;
For when they op'd the historic page,
The vices of a barbarous age
Had no existence there.

But after Greece, by Rome o'ercome,
Could not afford a peaceful home,
She cross'd the raging main,
For science cannot dwell with war,
But rather mounts her splendid car,
And seeks some happier plain.

Italia's sons her influence feels,
And at her shrine by thousands kneel,
Those blessings to obtain,
Which she on Grecian bards bestow'd,
And which unceasingly have flow'd
From her benignant reign.

How much her virtues influenced there,
Horace's, and Maro's works declare,
And blazon forth her fame:
What power she had o'er rustic men,
To make them orators, is seen
In Tully's deathless name.

At length, when Rome in dust was laid,
Science her airy wings display'd,
And mounted far away:
Long in the heavens secure she dwelt,
While discord's scourge the ocean felt,
And earth in darkness lay.

But when fair peace assum'd the reign,
And drove Bellona from the plain,
Science again appeared;
In England, Germany and Spain,
In France, and Italy again,
Her temples soon were rear'd:

But when at length destructive war,
Rush'd in upon her iron car,
And delug'd them in blood;
Far to the west she wing'd her way,
Left waving hosts without delay,
And pass'd the Atlantic's flood.

Columbia! midst thy pleasant groves,
Secure from wars, the goddess roves,
And thus invites to come;
"Haste! freedom's sons, my standard join,
"*Your* country shall be ever *mine*,
"And rival Greece and Rome."

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